

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: XGDS 3

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, TH

SUBJ: GENERAL KRIT SIWARA'S STANCE ON US SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIA
FROM THAILAND

REF: A. BANGKOK 4793; B. BANGKOK 4795 (NOTAL) C. BANGKOK 4794

SUMMARY: GENERAL KRIT, IN MY MARCH 23 MEETING WITH HIM, CONFIRMED THAT THE THAI NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL HAD RECENTLY DECIDED NOT TO HALT U.S. SUPPORT TO CAMBODIA FROM THAILAND. THE RTG INTENDED TO CONFUSE THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC ON THIS ISSUE. IT HAS SUCCEEDED IN THAT TACTIC, BUT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HOLD THEM AT BAH. IF THE RTG SUMMONS ME, I INTEND TO EMPHASIZE THE GRAVITY OF SUCH A DECISION, AND STONEWALL A RESPONSE. WE SHOULD MEANWHILE ANSWER "NO COMMENT" TO THE PRESS.
END SUMMARY.

1. I SAW ROYAL THAI ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF GENERAL KRIT SIWARA MARCH 23. I RAISED THE PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND DEFENSE MINISTER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN ON
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CAMBODIAN SUPPORT. (REFTEL A) I DISPLAYED THE HEADLINES IN THE

MARCH 23 BANGKOK 23 BANGKOK POST: "AIRLIFT MUST STOP, CONFIRMS PRAMARN". KRIT SAID THAT HE HAD EARLIER IN THE MORNING CHECKED WITH THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (NSC), AIR CHIEF MARCHALL SITTHI SAWETSILA. SITTHI CONFIRMED THAT THE NSC MEETING OF MARCH 21 (REFTEL) RESULTED IN A DISCUSSION TO PERMIT CONTINUATION OF THE FLIGHTS BUT TO OBFUSCATE THAT DECISION IN PUBLIC.

2. I STRESSED TO GENERAL KRIT THAT WE WOULD REGARD UNILATERAL THAI SUSPENSION OF OUR CAMBODIAN SUPPORT FLIGHTS AS A GRAVE ACT WITH SERIOUS SECURITY CONSEQUENCES FOR BOTH THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES. I ADDED THAT IT WOULD HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP BEYOND THE CAMBODIAN ISSUE. KRIT REPLIED THAT THAILAND DID NOT WANT TO SEE A COMMUNIST CAMBODIA, AND THAT HE RECOGNIZED THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT WOULD COLLAPSE WITHOUT THE FLIGHTS. TAN SON NHUT COULD HANDLE ONLY A THIRD THE CARGO OF UTAPAO. WE SHOULD KEEP ON FLYING OUR PLANES. EVEN PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT AGREED WITH THIS DECISION.

3. I EXPRESSED THE U.S. APPRECIATION FOR THIS LINE OF REASONING, BUT REMARKED THAT THE PRESS AND STUDENT AGITATORS MAY NOT LET EITHER GOVERNMENT ALONE ON THIS ISSUE. WE INTENDED TO REPLY "NO COMMENT" TO FURTHER PRESS INQUIRIES ON THIS SUBJECT AS LONG AS THAT TACK REMAINED FEASIBLE, BUT KRIT COULD ALSO HELP BY URGING THAT THAI LEADERS BE ESPECIALLY TACITURN ON THIS SUBJECT. KRIT AGREED THAT SILENCE WAS PREFERABLE BUT DID NOT VOLUNTEER TO INTERCEDE WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT: KRIT SAID TO CONTACT HIM IF THE RTG ISSUES AN ULTIMATUM ON THE FLIGHTS. HE LEAVES MARCH 24 FOR KHORAT, HOWEVER, AND WILL CELEBRATE HIS 61ST BIRTHDAY THERE THE FOLLOWING DAY. IF A CRISIS EMERGES MONDAY OR TUESDAY, HE WILL BE OUT OF REACH. ADDITIONALLY, ALTHOUGH KRIT CLAIMS HE IS CLOSE TO PRAMAN, HE CHECKED WITH SITTHI TO FIND OUT WHAT PRAMAN WAS SAYING TO THE PRESS. KRIT HAS APPARENTLY BANKROLLED MANY MEMBERS OF THE CURRENT CABINET. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE REMAINS THE PRIMARY PERSON IN THAILAND WHO CAN EFFECT GOVERNMENT CHANGES BY INDIRECT INFLUENCE OR OUTRIGHT FORCE. HE NEVERTHE-
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LESS DOES NOT RUN THE RTG IN AN OPERATIONAL SENSE, AND DOES NOT HAVE THE CABINET AT HIS FEET. HE IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MAN IN THE RTG TO HAVE ON OUR SIDE, BUT HE IS NOT OMnipotent IN THE SENSE THAT SARIT THANARAT WAS.

5. KRIT'S STANCE CONFIRMS MY JUDGMENT THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE THE FLIGHTS WITHOUT CHECKING WITH THE PRIME

MINISTER OR EITHER OF HIS CABINET OFFICERS WHO ARE
CONCERNED WITH THIS ISSUE. WE SHOULD ALSO CONTINUE TO TURN
OFF THE PRESS BOTH HERE AND IN WASHINGTON WITH "NO COMMENT".
IF THE RTG SUMMONS ME, I INTEND TO LOOK AT THIS PROBLEM
IN THE THEN CURRENT CONTEXT BUT TO STONEWALL ANY REQUEST FOR
CESSATION OF FLIGHTS. I WILL SAY, AS I TOLD KRIT, THAT WE
REGARD SUCH A DECISION AS HAVING SERIOUS
CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR BILTERAL RELATIONSHIP BEYOND THE SINGLE
ISSUE OF CAMBODIA, AND THAT I WILL HAVE TO CONSULT MY
GOVERNMENT.
MASTERS

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